Alaska Alternate Assessment

2014 Consequential Validity Survey Report

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Consequential Validity

Consequential validity was introduced as a validity concept in 1990 (Messick, 1989). Shepard broadened the definition to include the categories of both positive/negative consequences, as well as intended/unintended consequences (Shepard, 1997). It is disputed whether the consequences of test uses are the responsibility of the test user or the test author, or even whether consequential validity should be included within our overall concept of test validity (Popham, 1997). However, most agree that it is important to consider the consequences of test uses in some fashion, irrespective of who is responsible and whether or not the consequences of test uses should be part of our concept of validity or treated separately. What is clear is that the process of validation is dependent upon the decision-making procedures employed as well as the consequences of those decisions (Kane, 2001). In addition, The Standards and Federal Peer Review requirements both include documentation of consequences of test uses in their respective conceptions of consequential validity (AERA, NCME, & APA, 1999; OESE, 2007).

Consistent with the technical adequacy requirements established by the Title 1 statewide assessment system, "Has the State ascertained whether the assessment produces intended and unintended consequences?" (OESE, 2007, p. 42), Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development (EED) implemented a research survey program to address the need to document the consequences, both intended and unintended, of the Alaska Alternate Assessments (AKAA). These research questions have been framed based upon current consequential validity approaches for alternate assessments in the literature, as well as issues that are of specific value in Alaska (Kampher, Horvath, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2001; Kleinert, Kennedy, & Kearns, 1999; Perie, 2008; Roach, Elliott, & Berndt, 2007).

Lane, Parke, and Stone (1998) suggest that state assessments are intended to impact: 1) student, teacher, and administrator motivation and effort; 2) curriculum and instructional content and strategies; 3) content and format of classroom assessments; 4) improved learning for all students; 5) professional development support; 6) use and nature of test preparation activities; 7) student, teacher and public awareness and beliefs about the assessment, criteria for judging performance, and the use of assessment results.

Lane, et al., also list the possible unintended consequences as the following: 1) narrowing of the curriculum and instruction to focus only on the specific learning outcomes assessed; 2) use of test preparation materials that are closely linked to the assessment without making changes to the curriculum and instruction; 3) use of unethical test preparation materials; and 4) inappropriate use of test scores by administrators.

Additional intended consequences in Alaska might include: 1) more access to and inclusion in extra-curricular school functions; 2) more acceptance of both staff who work with them and students in the school community; 3) more equal distribution of school resources to classrooms serving students who take the AKAA; and, 4) greater alignment between IEP goals and objectives and state standards.

Additional unintended consequences in Alaska might include: 1) students are inappropriately identified for participation in the AKAA, which significantly decreases expectations for them; 2) decreased development of functional goals and objectives, even if those goals and objectives are considered more appropriate for the student by the IEP team; 3) increased turnover of special education teachers; 4) decreased elective course offerings; 5) decreased extra-curricular offerings; and, 6) additional stigmatization of special education students.

The consequential validity statements and questions included in this study were designed to reflect current interests in the field and founded in the construct map elaborated in Figure 1 (Wilson, 2005, pp. 25-40). Both scaled and open-ended responses are requested in order to gather both comparable data as well as a rich variety of information. The results reflect current teacher perceptions regarding the social consequences of test uses related to the AKAA. The results are generally consistent with prior findings, where teachers were relatively ambivalent to mildly positive about the impact of the state's alternate assessment, but concerned about how much time it took to administer and/or prepare for the assessment (Kampher et al., 2001; Roach et al., 2007). The survey instrument may be found in Appendix A.

Method

Respondents

Responses were received from 143 participants. Qualified Assessors (QAs) made up 77.6% of respondents, Qualified Trainers (QTs) made up 18.9% of the respondents, and 3.5% were Administrators. All respondents had at least a Bachelor's degree, while fifty-eight percent of the respondents held Master's degrees. No respondents had Doctoral degrees. Ninety-five percent of the respondents held special education licenses. The majority of respondents administered the AKAA this year, at 90.2%. The respondents' average years teaching experience was 12.5 years, with an average of 8.6 years teaching SWSCDs.

Procedure

The Alaska Alternate Assessment Consequential Validity Survey was distributed online via the Qualtrics online survey system (http://www.qualtrics.com) from January 24, 2014 through May 5, 2014. The survey link was distributed via the ak.k12test.com website.

Survey responses were downloaded in an Excel comma separated values file and analyzed with SPSS version 22. The Likert scale employed was recoded such that it ranged from -2 to +2, with 0 corresponding to the former center of the five-pt Likert scale of three (-2 = strongly disagree, -1 = disagree, 0 = neither agree nor disagree, 1= agree, and 2 = strongly agree). Questions that were negatively framed were reverse coded. The survey was composed of 33 quantitative questions rated against the Likert scale, 3 qualitative, open-ended response questions, and one question that asked for further description regarding instruction. A summary variable was also calculated for the entire set of quantitative variables as an example of whether respondents were generally more positive or negative across all questions.

Results

Quantitative

The results across all quantitative survey questions were normally distributed and there are no concerns related to skew or kurtosis noted. Summary statistics including frequencies, average responses, and standard deviations are conveyed in Table 1 and Table 2. Graphic results for the positively worded and negatively worded questions are presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3, respectively.

The results demonstrate that Alaska educators generally have a mild, positive impression regarding the social impact that the AKAA is having on students with significant cognitive disabilities, as measured by our survey. Respondents generally responded that they mildly agreed that positive impacts could be associated with the AKAA; at the same time, they also conveyed that they found only one negative consequence applied to the AKAA, namely, that students need more functional skills. This is an instructional impact statement that must be qualified by the fact that they do not believe the AKAA has

increased attention on academic in an inappropriate manner. They simply feel that academics and functional skills are required. The mean scores for the positively worded questions ranged from -.38 (Improved student acceptance) to +47 (Academic skills are improving). Keeping in mind that an average score of +1 would mean that the respondents are in agreement, these results are relatively equivocal, but generally more positive than negative.

Survey respondents were mildly positive about administrative functions related to the AKAA, meaning that they feel that the training, assessment, scoring, and reporting systems are working sufficiently. For example the average scores for the accessibility of the AKAA, the provision of accommodations, usefulness of official and unofficial reports, and their self-reports of knowledge related to the AKAA were all positive. They also are in mild agreement with statements that the AKAA is associated with improvements in academic goals and objectives, IEP alignment to standards, and the academic skills of SWSCDs. However, the respondents did not appear to agree that positive social consequences have resulted from the AKAA. For example, they did not agree that the AKAA has increased student access to general education or school resources, or improved the social acceptance of SWSCDs. They also do not perceive professional benefits for themselves that might be associated with the AKAA, such as increased professional development opportunities. The scores from the survey

The negatively worded questions demonstrate similar mildly positive patterns, with the average ratings ranging from -0.67 (Need more functional skills) to +1.05 (High stakes lead to unethical practices). Bearing in mind that these items were reverse-coded, this means that respondents generally felt that more functional skills are needed for their

students, while the generally disagreed with the statement that the AKAA has resulted in any unethical behaviors on the part of educators.

An overall rating of respondents' perception of the impact of the AKAA was conducted by summing the contributions of the 29 quantitative questions. This variable was based upon a scale that ranged from -58 to +58. The mean rating across all questions was 3.24 with a standard deviation of 10.29. Educators in Alaska appear to be mildly positive about the AKAA. They also perceive that there are no negative consequences directly associated with the AKAA. Overall results are visually demonstrated in Figure 4.

Qualitative

Survey respondents were asked to comment regarding what they perceived as the greatest positive consequence of the AKAA, as well as the greatest negative consequence of the AKAA. Educators regarded four areas as being positive consequences that they associate with the AKAA: 1) Training and support: respondents were overall very pleased with the quality and ease of use of the training and proficiency system, as well as the technical assistance provided by EED and DRA; 2) Ease of administration: respondents stated that the test is easy to administer, and easy to score (including improvements in scoring writing), 3) Utility: educators appreciate both the immediate unofficial report, as well as the summative score reports; those who use the data found that it can be helpful for a variety of applications, including placement, IEP development founded in the ExGLEs, adaptation of curriculum and instruction; and, 4) Participation: respondents value the fact that SWSCDs are allowed to participate in a meaningful assessment that is similar to the process followed for their general education peers. Here are representative quotations in each of the areas above (all submissions are anonymous and quoted exactly as submitted, including possible typos):

1. "Training has been very good. I always knew what I was supposed to do. The website was excellent and easy to use. The staff did a great job of continueal improvement."
2. It's ease of accessibility. It's easy to use, easy for students to understand, and addresses the basics, which everyone with some level of independence needs to know regardless of ability."
3. I appreciate the insight that the Alternate Assessment and the Extended GLEs (or Early Entry Points) give me in developing curriculum and appropriate goals for my students with significant cognitive disabilities.
4. "Awareness by parents, administrators, teachers alike that there are numerous needs with students with disabilities that need to be addressed separately from students in the general education classroom. The AKAA allows these students to show their own strengths and areas of weaknesses using the AKAA without being bombarded by information on the SBA's which is not to their ability or grade/age level. These kiddos don't "fit into" some state and national standards and need their own curriculum(s), testing, etc. "

There were two primary domains that educators felt were negative aspects of the AKAA: 1) Functional skills versus academic skills: educators remain concerned that the focus upon academic skills evidenced in the AKAA is inappropriate in some cases, particularly as students get older and families begin to focus upon a successful post-secondary transition; and, 2) Time: educators felt that the time spent testing could better be spent working on instructional goals related to the students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Here are representative responses related to both of these domains (all submissions are anonymous and quoted exactly as submitted, including possible typos):

1. "My students need to learn how to live as independently as possible and not be so focused on academic goals."
2. "We consistently hear complaints from teachers about the time needed to train, prepare, administer, and score the assessment. It takes exponentially more time than proctoring the SBA, which creates inequality issues in schools and positions. We also hear complaints about the tests not being prepared, which also contributes to the amount of time needed. Most teachers would much rather receive a booklet than to print and prepare multiple copies of a test. It would also be helpful to have leveled tasks that increase in complexity from very basic to more advanced to give an accurate reflection of what students know and can do, rather than starting with the regular test and then switching to ELOS, which, by the way, isn't always useful information on student progress. Thanks for hearing our concerns."

Conclusion

The AKAA consequential validity study points to a few actionable steps that can be taken with a focus toward continuous improvement; however, the assessment program is undergoing a significant transition toward the implementation of a new alternate assessment, the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment (DLM). The opportunity for continuous improvement evidenced in this study is related to the AKAA, which will only be administered in science moving forward. The field has expressed both hope and trepidation with respect to implementation of the new DLM assessment:

1. "I believe this may have already been solved by the anticipated switch for next year. The current assessment system is time consuming (preparation) and not rigorous enough for some students."
2. More training as mentors and districts now switch to the online system for R, W and M with DLM. This feels a bit stressful and I'm trying not to stress."

With regard to recommendations, there are clearly a few steps that could be taken to improve the experiences of educators and students with respect to the AKAA. First, any time-saving procedures that could be implemented would be beneficial. For example, the DLM assessment administrators might be encouraged to compose the assessments of as few items as possible while maintaining reliability. It also appears that the new DLM assessment will be delivered in an online format that will reduce time needed to print, organize, and dispense with the paper/pencil versions for at least some students. The training process cannot be reduced in terms of time commitment without seriously compromising the inferences we wish to draw regarding test administrator acumen for the AKAA.

Responses to the consequential validity study, as well as a review of the assessment data, reveal that there is a group of students who are difficult to involve in the AKAA in a

meaningful manner, as they have severely limited communication and/or medical complications that render assessment inappropriate. It is thus recommended that EED consider an objective waiver/exemption application process for districts that would maintain high, yet reasonable, standards for student with severely limited communication and/or medical challenges. It may be more appropriate to focus on communication goals and/or living skills development (e.g., due to the fact that they are asleep most of the school day, absent due to health-related issues, etc.). EED may also want to address assessment of students with severe communication difficulties and/or medical complications by encouraging the new test vendor, DLM, to develop an assessment that addresses the communication level of the students. Information regarding communication level is critical for all students, but might be a way in which the very low functioning students may be meaningfully included in the AKAA system.

One thing that is readily apparent is that EED has worked effectively over the years to develop a robust mentor network that allows for a continuous feedback loop and consistent communication and standardization in the field. Respondents appreciate the responsiveness of EED and DRA to technical assistance questions, as well as the effort that has been expended to provide an efficient and useful training process. The mentor network is clearly an example for other states to follow. Here are some parting comments from respondents that summarize the overall sentiment well:

"I appreciate that our feedback is always taken into consideration...shortened training, shortened practice tests, etc. The responsiveness from the State and DRA about problems encountered or suggestions made is very much appreciated. The test has certainly improved over time."

"The support from the state department. I have been lost (my own fault) and every email I send is replied with detail directions for me."

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Table 1

Summary statistics for positively worded survey questions

Question	*f*	*M*	*SD*
Is accessible	143	0.29	0.70
Has sufficient accommodations	143	0.45	0.58
Believes students will meets standards	143	0.05	0.88
Academic skills are improving	143	0.47	0.69
I teach differently due to AKAA	143	-0.24	0.87
ELOS allows participation for low-performing	143	0.11	0.55
EEPs helpful	143	0.24	0.76
Unofficial reports useful	143	0.41	0.69
Receive official reports	143	0.19	0.80
Can interpret official reports	143	0.38	0.65
Students appropriately identified	143	0.43	0.63
Results are used appropriately	143	0.23	0.70
Improved student access to school resources	143	-0.36	0.89
Increased access to general education	143	-0.37	0.91
Improved learning outcomes	143	-0.05	0.94
Increased educator motivation and effort	143	-0.15	0.93
Increased PD opportunities	143	-0.22	0.89
Knowledgeable about expected changes	143	0.08	0.87
Knowledgeable about new standards	143	0.29	0.74
University program prepared me well	143	0.02	0.88
Improved student acceptance	143	-0.38	0.87
Increased public awareness	143	-0.27	0.89
Increased academic goals and objectives	143	0.10	0.86
Improved IEP alignment to standards	143	0.12	0.83

Table 2

Summary statistics for negatively worded survey questions

Question	*f*	*M*	*SD*
Need more functional skills	143	-0.67	1.03
High stakes lead to unethical practices	143	1.05	0.87
Has led to increased staff turnover	143	0.31	0.76
Led to increased social stigmatism	143	0.61	0.85
Inappropriate shift from functional to academic	143	0.13	0.97

Note. These values were recoded such that a positive value denotes a positive outcome, meaning that respondents disagreed with the negatively worded statement. The only negative statement that respondents generally agreed with was that students need more functional skills.

Figure 1.

Construct map of the social consequences of participation in the Alaska Alternate Assessments.

Respondents		Item Responses
+		+
		Increased access to the general education curriculum
Perceive Great Benefits		
		Improved learning outcomes for students with significant cognitive disabilities
Perceive Marginal Benefits		
		Had a small, positive impact on teacher professional development
Perceive Little to No Impact		
		Had a small, negative impact on the development of academic goals in IEPs
Perceive Marginal Negative Impact		
		Resulted in increased social stigmatism for SWSCDs
Perceive Severe Negative Impact		
		Led to increased turnover of special education teachers
-		-

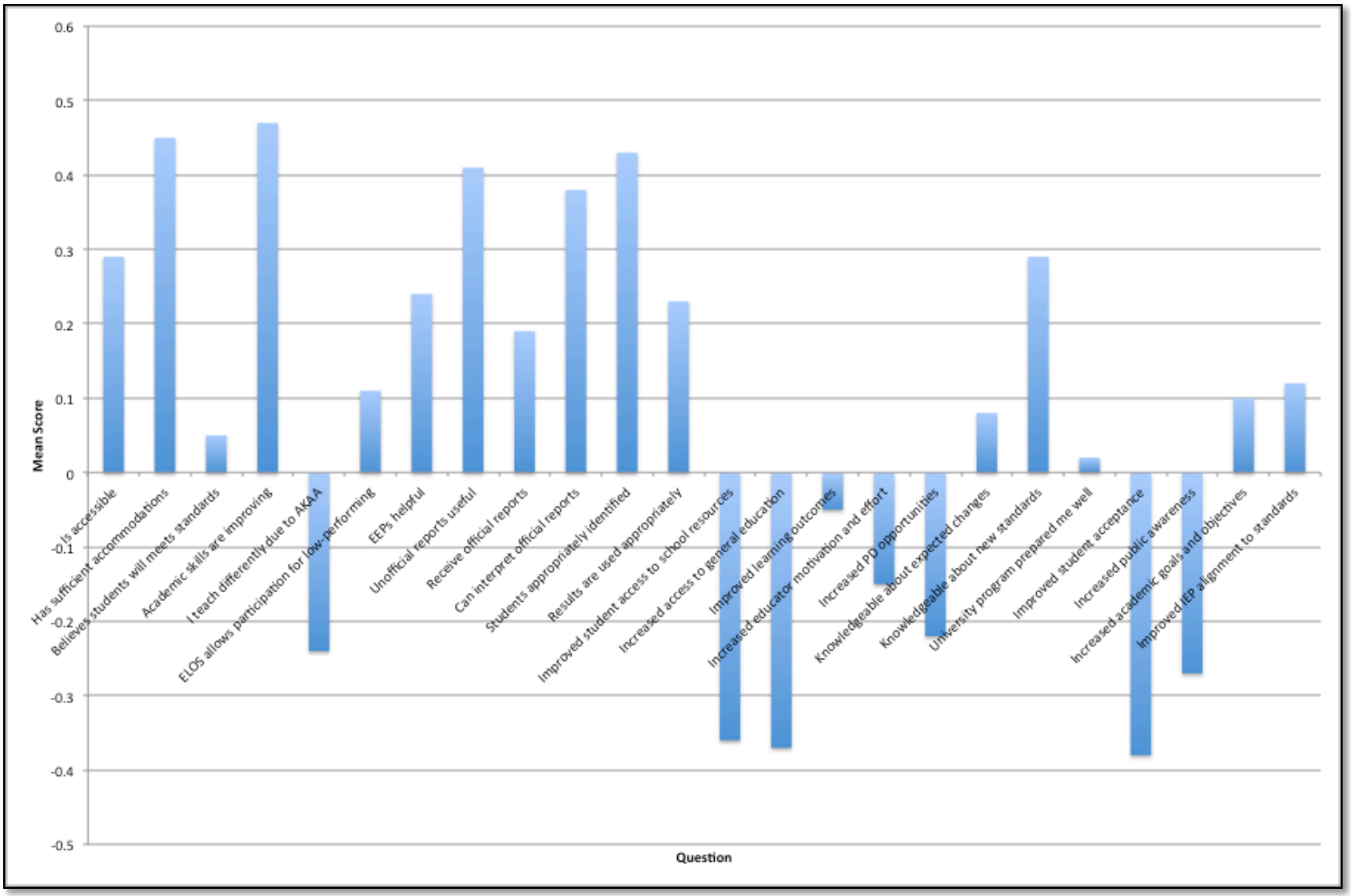
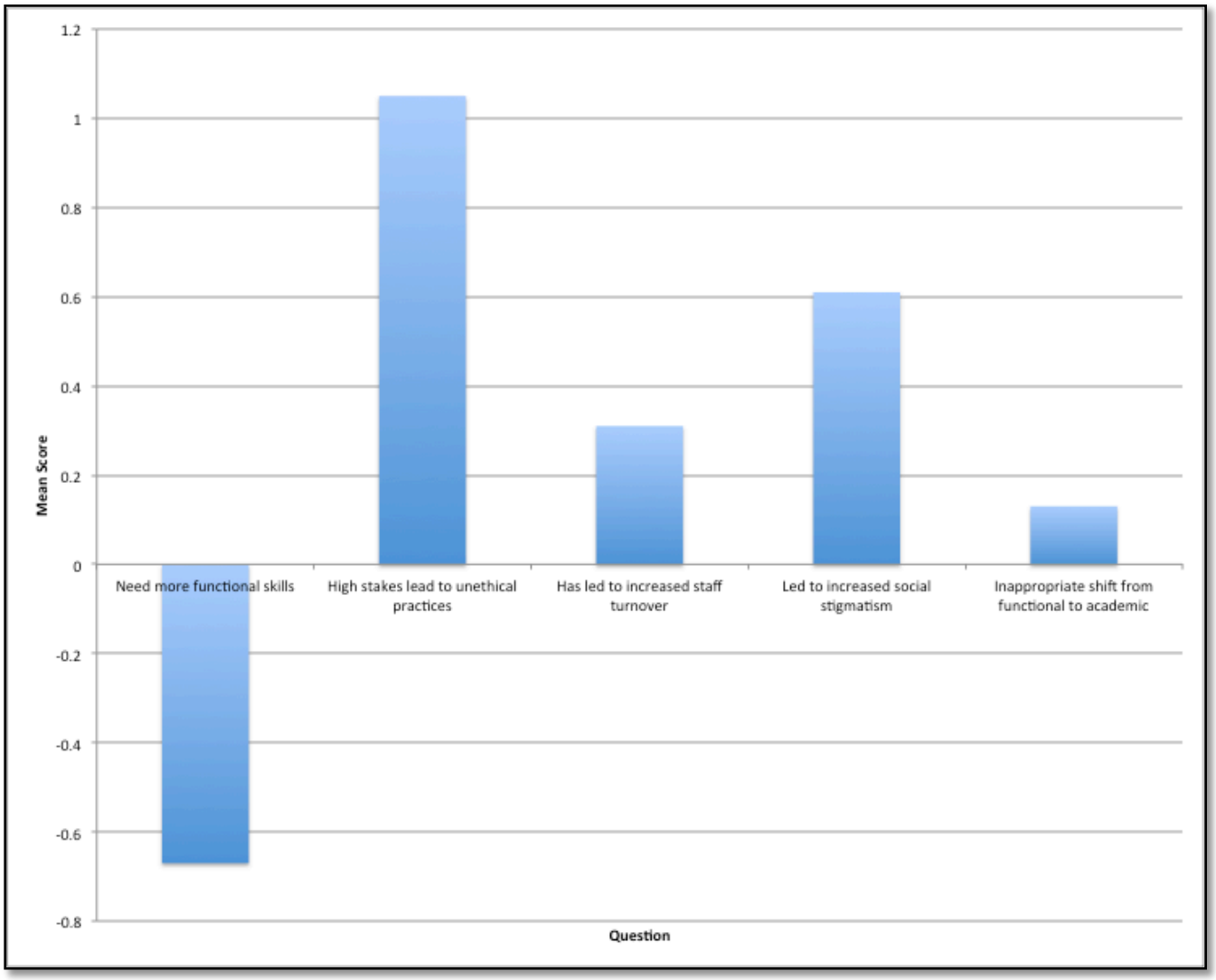


Figure 2.
Bar graph demonstrating the overall quantitative survey results for positively worded questions.


1.2
1
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0
-0.2
-0.4
-0.6
-0.8
Mean Score
Need more functional skills
High stakes lead to unethical practices
Has led to increased staff turnover
Led to increased social stigmatism
Inappropriate shift from functional to academic
Question

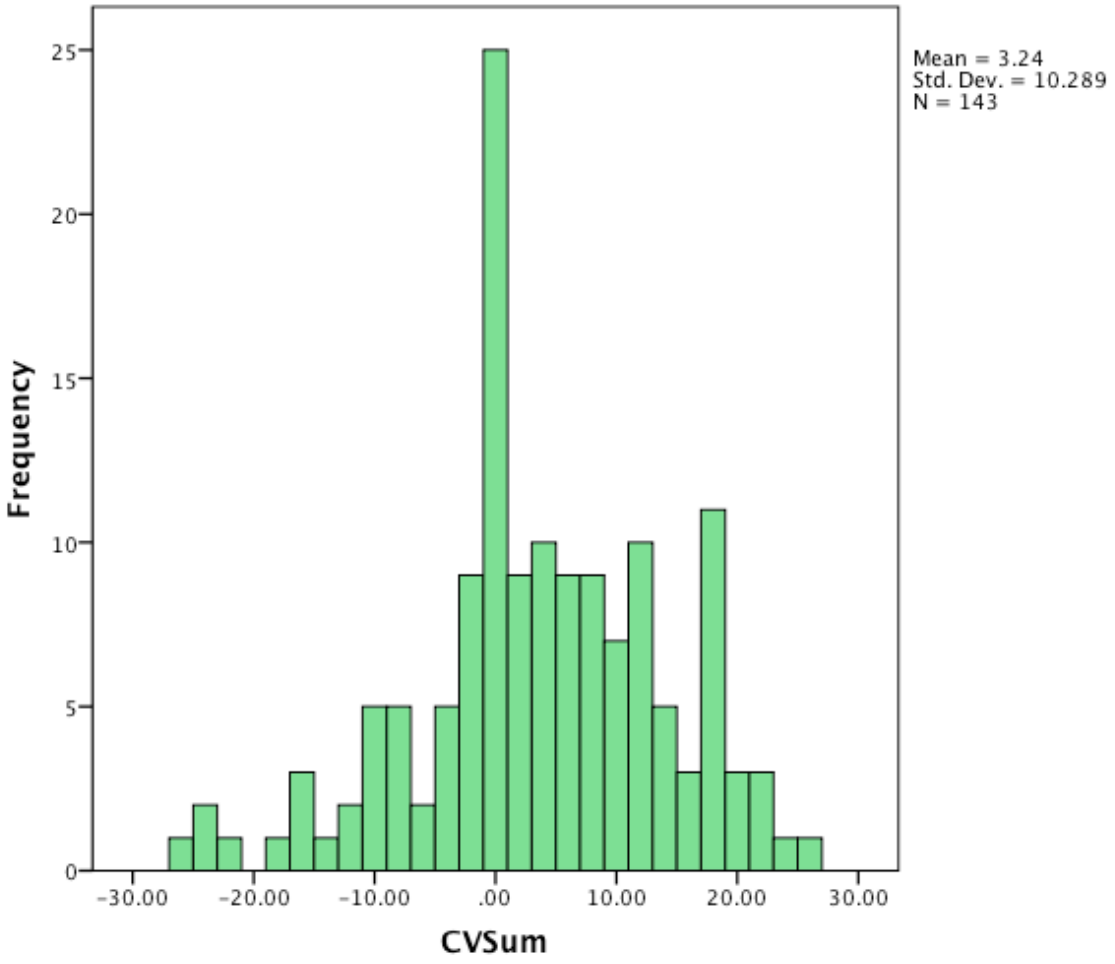


Figure 4.

Histogram demonstrating summary statistic distribution for all quantitative questior
rated on the Likert scale. The results demonstrate more general positivity than negat
The possible range of scores is from -58 to +58 (29 total questions, with a scale of -2

Appendix A – Survey Instrument

LIKERT SCALE:

1= Strongly Disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neither Agree nor Disagree

4= Agree

5= Strongly Agree

Scaled Responses

-2 - -1 - 0 - 1 - 2

Domain	Sect	Description	NOTES
Introduction & Purpose	A	Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS): Students with significant cognitive disabilities take an AA-AAS when they meet EED's eligibility criteria, including that they cannot take the Standards Based Assessment - even with accommodations. Alternate assessments were first established by the IDEA in 1997 and later supplemented by NCLB in 2001. Purpose: The goal of this survey is to better understand the impact that the Alaska Alternate Assessment (AKAA) is having on the educational programs that serve students with significant cognitive disabilities. We would like to hear from all Qualified Assessors and Qualified Mentor-Trainers on a number of issues that relate tot he administration of the assessment and the use of the results. We are focusing on the transition toward using the new Alaska State Standards this year. Confidentiality: This is a confidential survey. You will be asked questions based upon your role this year, up to a total of 25 questions, plus a demographic section.	
Position	B	Please select which best describes your current position, and then click next. Qualified Assessor (QA) Qualified Mentor-Trainer (QT) Administrator	
Activity	C	Did you administer the assessments to a student/students this year?	

		Yes No	**If yes, then proceed to question #1** **If no, then skip to question # 17**
Dimension	**? #**	**Question**	
Instructional Relevance	1	The students I teach need more instruction on functional living skills	
	2	In reference to #1 above, please explain why:	
	3	My instruction in reading focuses on	
		Word meaning	
		Basic reading skills	
		Basic comprehension	
		Functional reading skills (name, signs, etc.)	
	4	My instruction in math focuses on	
		Number recognition and use	
		Basic operations	
		Applied problems	
		Functional math (time, measurement, money, etc.)	
	5	My instruction in writing focuses on	
		Forming letters and words	
		Forming sentences	
		Composing stories	
		Functional writing skills (name, using communication device, etc.)	
	6	The Alternate Assessment is accessible to my students	
	7	I have sufficient access to accommodations and assistive devices when administering the Alternate Assessment	
	8	The students I teach are likely to meet the academic standards assessed with the Alternate Assessment	
	9	The students I teach are improving in their academic skills	
	10	I am teaching differently since the Alternate Assessment was implemented	
ELOS	11	Did you administer the ELOS items to students this year?	

		Yes No	**If yes, then proceed to question #12** **If no, then skip to question #14**
	12	The Early Entry Points (EEPs) to the Extended Grade Level Expectations (ExGLEs) are helpful in planning instruction for my lowest-performing students	
	13	The Extended Levels of Support (ELOS) assessments option allows my lowest-performing students to participate in the assessment process when they would not be able to otherwise	
Student Reports	14	I know how to access and use the unofficial student reports generated by the DRA data entry website	
	15	I receive the Official Student Reports that are made available to my district	
	16	I am confident in my ability to interpret the Official Student Reports for IEP teams and to parents	
System Level	17	Students who participate in the AKAA are appropriately identified	
	18	Stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents) use the results from the AKAA appropriately	
	19	Given its high stakes, stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents) are more likely to engage in unethical testing practices	
	20	Participation in the AKAA has improved my students' access to school resources	
	21	Participation in the AKAA has increased access to the general education curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities.	**New**
	22	Participation in the AKAA has improved academic learning outcomes for students with significant cognitive disabilities	**New**
	23	Participation in the AKAA has increased student, teacher, and administrative motivation and effort	
	24	The implementation of the AKAA has increased the professional development opportunities available to teachers who serve students with significant cognitive disabilities	
	25	I am knowledgeable about the changes pending for the Alaska Alternate Assessment in relation to the recent adoption of Alaska State Standards	
	26	I have some knowledge of the recently-adopted Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards	
	27	My university teacher preparation program prepared me well to teach and assess academic curriculum to students with significant cognitive disabilities	**New**

	28	Participation in the AKAA has led to increased turnover of special education teachers	**New**
	29	Participation in the AKAA has improved the acceptance of students with significant cognitive disabiliites in the school's community	**New**
	30	Participation in the AKAA has led to increased social stigmatism for students with significant cognitive disabilities	**New**
	31	Participation in the AKAA has led to greater public awareness of the academic needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities	**New**
	32	Participation in the AKAA has resulted in an inappropriate shift of instructional priorities (from functional to academic)	**New**
	33	Participation in the AKAA has increased the development of academic goals and objectives in IEPs for students with significant cognitive disabilities	**New**
	34	Participation in the AKAA has improved the alignment between IEP goals and objectives and state content standards and benchmarks	**New**
Demographics	35	Please enter your district name	
	36	How many years have you been teaching overall?	
	37	How many years have you been teaching students with significant disabilities?	
	38	Please indicate the college degrees or certificates you have earned. (Check all that apply)	
		Bachelor's	
		Masters	
		Doctorate	
		Other Certificates	
		Other (please specify)	
	39	Which of the following teaching certifications or licenses do you hold? (Check all that apply)	
		General Education	
		Special Education	
		Other	
		Other (please specify)	
	40	Which of the following subject area endorsements or certifications do you hold? (Check all the apply)	
		Elementary	
		Secondary	
		English Language Arts	
		Mathematics	
		Science	
		Health/Physical Education	
		Fine or Performing Arts	

		Social Studies	
		Other	
		Other (please specify)	
	41	Number of Students Assessed by Grade Band	
		Grade 3-4	
		Grade 5-6	
		Grade 7-8	
		Grade 9-10	
Open-ended	42	Please describe what you most appreciate about the Alaska Alternate Assessment	
	43	Please describe the area that needs the most improvement within the Alaska Alternate Assessment System	